PR
3461
F67m

Francklin

Matilda

lifornia
ional
lity

THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

MATILDA:

A

TRAGEDY.

As it is performed at the

THEATRE-ROYAL,

IN

DRURY-LANE.

By the AUTHOR of the EARL OF WARWICK.

DUBLIN:

Printed for J. EXSHAW, W. SLEATER, J. POTTS, D. CHAMBERLAINE, J. WILLIAMS, W. WILSON, J. SHEPPARD, J. A. HUSBAND, R. MONCRIEFFE, R. MARCHBANK, T. WALKER, C. JENKIN, and J. HILLARY. M. DCC. LXXV.

DEDICATION.

TO THE PUBLIC.

PR
3461
F67m

SIR,

PERMIT me to return you my unfeigned thanks for your kind reception of this TRAGEDY on the ſtage, and to requeſt the continuance of your favour to it in the cloſet. It would be the higheſt ingratitude in me to forget the only patron I ever had the good fortune to meet with, by whoſe powerful aſſiſtance I have been enabled to defeat the combined forces of envy, malice and detraction. I muſt at the ſame time fairly confeſs, my victory over the enemy was owing, I believe, as many other victories have been, more to the art and proweſs of my OFFICERS than to any extraordinary merit of my own. To the firſt in command, Miſs YOUNGE, I have infinite obligations, which I ſhall always gratefully acknowledge, tho' I may never have it in my power to repay them; nor can the ſkill and conduct of my generals, REDDISH, SMITH and PALMER, be ſufficiently admired. To your patronage and protection I moſt heartily and ſincerely recommend them: If I have been the happy inſtrument of giving them a favourable opportunity of riſing in YOUR eſteem, it will give me the greateſt ſatisfaction. YOU can beſt diſtinguiſh their merit, and YOU alone are able to reward it.

I am, Sir, your much obliged,

And devoted humble Servant,

The Author.

881302

Dramatis Perſonæ.

M E N.

MORCAR,	*Earl of Mercia,*	Mr. REDDISH.
EDWIN,	*Earl of Northumberland,*	Mr. SMITH.
SIWARD,	*Morcar's friend,*	Mr. PALMER.

OFFICERS, *&c.*

W O M E N.

MATILDA,	*A priſoner in the camp of Morcar,*	Miſs YOUNGE.
BERTHA,	*Her friend,*	Miſs PLATT.

SCENE, MORCAR's *Camp, and the Environs near* NOTTINGHAM.

PROLOGUE.

WRITTEN BY A FRIEND.

SPOKEN BY Mr. SMITH.

A Tragic Tale, from Norman William's Age,
Simple, and unadorn'd, attempts the Stage.
Our ſilly Bard, more ſimple than his Tale,
Thinks on your poliſh'd Manners to prevail;
What in thoſe barb'rous Days were counted Crimes,
Are Slips of courſe in theſe enlighten'd Times:
Let not your Anceſtors too rude appear,
Though firm in Friendſhip, and in Love ſincere.
Love then like Glory did each Heart inflame,
Beauty *was* Virtue, *and to win it,* Fame.
Now Lovers loſe their Miſtreſſes with Grace,
As at New-Market they would loſe a Race,
Where, if in Hopes they ſeem a little croſs'd,
'Tis for the Money of the Match that's loſt.
When Tilts and Tournaments call'd forth the Brave,
The Fame of ſpotleſs Innocence to ſave,
Each gallant Knight preferr'd his Love to Life,
For then *the greateſt Bleſſing was a Wife:*
To prove their Chaſtity the dauntleſs Fair
Would walk through Flames, nor ſinge a ſingle Hair;
Nay, ſome ſo chaſte, ſo cold to all Deſire,
Not only 'ſcap'd it, they put out the Fire!
But now no Heroes die for Love's ſweet Paſſion,
And fiery Trials *are quite out of Faſhion.*
Ye Sons of Frailty—you whom Rage devours,
For you this Night the Muſe exerts her Pow'rs;
With crimſon Hands, pale Cheeks, and blood-ſhot Eyes;
She bids the Furies in their Terrors riſe!

PROLOGUE.

In Valour's Breaſt their Scorpion Stings they dart,
Firſt fire the Brain, and then corrupt the Heart.
But what avails all Virtue! Paſſion's Guſt,
Like Whirlwinds, drive it from the Heart like Duſt;
When Reaſon dawns, well may Repentance mourn
Love, Friendſhip, Duty, by the Roots up-torn.
To ſooth this fatal Vice, the Flatterer tells
In ſtormy Minds how warmeſt Friendſhip dwells;
The Tree whoſe ſheltering Arms ſpread kindly round,
If Light'ning-ſtruck, lies blaſted on the Ground;
In vain will Merits paſt Indulgence claim,
One Moment's Raſhneſs blaſts whole Years of Fame.

EPILOGUE.

EPILOGUE.

By the AUTHOR of the TRAGEDY.

SPOKEN BY Miss YOUNGE.

HA! ha! poor Creature! how you trembling ſtand!
Come to the Bar, Sir, and hold up your Hand;
You won't – by Council then you'd have it done,
And I muſt plead your Cauſe—well, get you gone.
[Coming forward to the Audience.
Now for the great Tribunal of Old Drury;
Are you all ſworn there—Gem'men of the Jury?
Good Men, and true, I hope—ſtay, let me ſee,
Amongſt you all he challenges—but three.
Phyſicians, Lawyers, Parſons he admits,
Beaux, Ladies, Courtiers, Maccaronies, Cits,
And only ſcratches—Critics, News-writers, *and* Wits.

The Critic *firſt we baniſh from our Seſſion,*
Death is his Trade, and Damning—his Profeſſion;
Diſqualify'd—becauſe, to ſay no further,
Butchers are never heard in Caſe of Murther.

Next we diſclaim th' Artificers *of* News,
Who live by Fibs, and flouriſh by Abuſe;
They muſt condemn, or loſe their daily Bread;
If they don't cut, and ſlaſh—they're never read;
Like fabled Giants here they roam for Food,
And Fe! Fa! Fum! ſnuff up an Author's Blood;
In the next Ledger *hang him up to roaſt,*
Or tear him Piece-meal in—the Morning-Poſt.

To Wits *we laſt except, and 'bove all other,*
The Hero of our Tale—a Rival Brother!

EPILOGUE.

As Rogues, just 'scap'd the Gallows, join the Shrieves,
Turn Hangmen, and tuck up their Fellow-Thieves;
So Bards condemn'd, exert the Critic's Skill,
And execute their Brethren of the Quill!
If like their own, indeed, the Brat should die,
They'll gladly join to write—its Elegy;
But if the Child is strong, and like to live,
That is a Crime they never can forgive.

From such let Englisb Juries still be free,
Our Author here appeals to your Decree,
The Public is—a Court of Equity.
If he has shock'd your Taste, your Sense, or Reason,
Or against Nature guilty been of Treason,
Off with his Head;—but if with honest Art,
His well-meant Scenes have touch'd the feeling Heart;
If they have rais'd your Pity, wak'd your Fears,
Or sweetly have "beguil'd you of your Tears,"
Let venial Errors your Indulgence claim,
Your Voice his Triumph, your Applause his Fame.

Speak by your Foreman—what says Goodman Pit?
Will you condemn the Prisoner, or acquit?
Your Verdict, Sirs, Not Guilty—*if you please—*
*You smile—*Acquitted—*hope you'll pay his Fees.*

MATILDA:

A TRAGEDY.*

ACT I.

SCENE, MATILDA's *Tent, with a view of the diſtant country.*

MATILDA, BERTHA.

MATILDA.

I Thank thee, gentle Bertha, for thy goodneſs;
If aught cou'd ſooth the anguiſh of my ſoul,
Or raiſe it from the horrors of deſpair
To hope and joy, 'twou'd be thy gen'rous friendſhip:
But I am ſunk ſo deep in miſery,
That comfort cannot reach me.

* *The reader will meet with ſome lines which, to ſhorten the ſcenes, were omitted in the repreſentation.*

Bert. Talk not thus,
My ſweet Matilda; innocence, like thine,
Muſt be the care of all-directing heav'n.
Already hath the interpoſing hand
Of Providence redeem'd thee from the rage
Of ſavage war, and ſhelter'd thee within
This calm aſylum. Mercia's potent Earl,
The noble Morcar, will protect thy virtues,
And, if I err not, wiſhes but to ſhare
His conqueſts with thee.

Matil. O, my friend, oft times
The flow'ry path that tempts our wand'ring ſteps
But leads to mis'ry; what thou fondly deem'ſt
My ſoul's beſt comfort, is its bitt'reſt woe.
Earl Morcar loves me. To the gen'rous mind
The heavieſt debt is that of gratitude,
When 'tis not in our power to repay it.

Bert. Oft have I heard thee ſay, to him thou ow'ſt
Thy honour and thy life.

Matil. I told thee truth.
Beneath my father's hoſpitable roof,
I ſpent my earlier happier days in peace
And ſafety: When the Norman conqu'ror came,
Diſcord, thou know'ſt, ſoon lit her fatal torch,
And ſpread deſtruction o'er this wretched land.
The loyal Ranulph flew to William's aid,
And left me to a faithful peaſant's care,
Who liv'd, ſequeſter'd in the fertile plains
Of rich Northumbria: There awhile I dwelt
In ſweet retirement, when the ſavage Malcolm
Ruſh'd on our borders.

Bert. I remember well
The melancholy hour. Confuſion rag'd
On ev'ry ſide, and deſolation ſpread
Its terrors round us. How did'ſt thou eſcape?

Matil.

Matil. A crew of deſp'rate ruffians ſeiz'd upon me,
A helpleſs prey: For, O! he was not there,
Who beſt cou'd have defended his Matilda.
Then had I fall'n a wretched ſacrifice
To brutal rage, and lawleſs violence,
Had not the gen'rous Morcar interpos'd
To ſave me: Tho' he join'd the guilty cauſe
Of foul rebellion, yet his ſoul abhor'd
Such violation. At his awful voice
The ſurly ruffians left me, and retir'd.
He bore me, half expiring in his arms,
Back to his tent; with ev'ry kind attention
There ſtrove to ſooth my griefs, and promis'd, ſoon
As fit occaſion offer'd, to reſtore me
To my afflicted father.

Bert. Something ſure
Was due to gen'rous Morcar for his aid,
So timely given.

Matil. No doubt: But mark what follow'd.
In my deliverer too ſoon I found
An ardent lover, ſighing at my feet.

Bert. And what is there the proudeſt of our ſex
Cou'd wiſh for more? To be the envy'd bride
Of noble Morcar, firſt of England's peers,
In fame and fortune.

Matil. Never truſt, my Bertha,
To outward ſhew. 'Tis not the ſmiles of fortune,
The pomp of wealth, or ſplendor of a court,
Can make us happy. In the mind alone,
Reſts ſolid joy, and true felicity,
Which I can never taſte: For, O, my friend!
A ſecret ſorrow weighs upon my heart.

Bert. Then pour it in the boſom of thy friend;
Let me partake it with thee.

Matil.

Matil. Gen'rous maid!
Know then, for nought will I conceal from thee,
I honour Mercia's Earl, revere his virtues,
And wiſh I cou'd repay him with myſelf;
But, bluſhing, I acknowledge it, the heart
His vows ſolicit, is not mine to give.
Bert. Has then ſome happier youth———
Matil. Another time
I'll tell thee all the ſtory of our loves.
But, O, my Bertha! did'ſt thou know to whom
My virgin faith is plighted, thou wou'd ſay
I am indeed unhappy.
Bert. Cou'd Matilda
Beſtow the treaſure of her heart on one
Unworthy of her choice?
Matil. Unworthy! No.
I glory in my paſſion for the beſt,
The lovelieſt of his ſex. O! he was all
That bounteous nature, prodigal of charms,
Did on her choiceſt fav'rite e'er beſtow.
His graceful form and ſweet deportment ſpoke
The fairer beauties of his kindred ſoul,
Where ev'ry grace and ev'ry virtue ſhone.
But thou wilt tremble, Bertha, when I tell thee,
He is Earl Morcar's—brother.
Bert. Ha! his brother!
The noble Edwin? Often have I heard
My father———
Matil. Did Lord Edrick know him then?
Bert. He knew his virtues, and his fame in arms,
And often wou'd lament the dire effects
Of civil diſcord, that cou'd thus diſſolve
The ties of nature, and of brethren make
The bitt'reſt foes. If right I learn, Lord Edwin

Is

Is William's firmeſt friend, and ſtill ſupports
His royal maſter.
Matil. Yes, my Bertha, there
I ſtill find comfort: Edwin ne'er was ſtain'd
As Morcar is, with foul diſloyalty,
But ſtands betwixt his ſov'reign and the rage
Of rebel multitudes, to guard his throne.
If nobly fighting in his country's cauſe,
My hero falls, I ſhall not weep alone;
The king he lov'd and honour'd, will lament him,
And grateful England mix her tears with mine.
Bert. And doth Earl Morcar know of Edwin's love?
Matil. O, no! I would not for a thouſand worlds
He ſhou'd ſuſpect it, leſt his fiery ſoul
Shou'd catch th' alarm, and kindle to a flame
That might deſtroy us all.
Bert. I know his warmth
And vehemence of temper, unreſtrain'd
By laws, and ſpurning at the royal pow'r
Which he contemns, he rules deſpotic here.
Matil. Alas! how man from man, and brother oft
From brother differs! Edwin's tender paſſion
Is ſoft and gentle as the balmy breath
Of vernal zephyrs; whilſt the ſavage north,
That curls the angry ocean into ſtorms,
Is a faint image of Earl Morcar's love:
'Tis rage, 'tis fury all. When laſt we met
He knit his angry brow, and frown'd ſevere
Upon me; then, with wild diſtracted look,
Bade me beware of trifling with his paſſion,
He wou'd not brook it—trembling I retired,
And bath'd my couch in tears.
Bert. Unhappy maid!
But time, that ſoftens ev'ry human woe,
Will bring ſome bleſt event, and lighten thine.

Matil.

Matil. Alas! thou know'ſt not what it is to love.
Haply thy tender heart hath never felt
The tortures of that ſoul-bewitching paſſion.
Its joys are ſweet and poignant, but its pangs
Are exquiſite, as I have known too well:
For, O! my Bertha, ſince the fatal hour
When Edwin left me, never hath ſweet peace,
That us'd to dwell with all its comforts here,
E'er deigned to viſit this afflicted breaſt.

Bert. Too plain, alas! I read thy ſorrows grief;
Sits in ſad triumph on thy faded cheek,
And half obſcures the luſtre of thy beauties.

Matil. Talk not of beauty, 'tis our ſex's bane,
And leads but to deſtruction. I abhor
The fatal gift. O! would it had pleas'd heav'n
To brand my homely features with the mark
Of foul deformity, or let me paſs
Unknown, and undiſtinguiſh'd from the herd
Of vulgar forms, ſave by the partial eye
Of my lov'd Edwin; then had I been bleſt
With charms unenvy'd, and a guiltleſs love.

Bert. Where is thy Edwin now?

Matil. Alas! I know not.
'Tis now three years ſince laſt theſe eyes beheld
Their deareſt object. In that humble vale,
Whence, as I told thee, Malcolm's fury drove me,
There firſt we met. O! how I cheriſh ſtill
The fond remembrance! There we firſt exchang'd
Our mutual vows, the day of happineſs
Was fixt; it came, and in a few ſhort hours
He had been made indiſſolubly mine,
When fortune, envious of our happineſs
And William's danger, call'd him to the field.

Bert. And ſince that parting have ye never met?

Matil.

Matil. O never, Bertha, never but in thought.
Imagination, kind anticipator
Of love's pleaſures, brings us oft' together.
Oft' as I ſit within my lonely tent,
And caſt my wiſhful eyes o'er yonder plain,
In ev'ry paſſing traveller I ſtrive
To trace his image, hear his lovely voice
In ev'ry ſound, and fain wou'd flatter me
Edwin ſtill lives, ſtill loves his loſt Matilda.

Bert. Who knows but fate, propitious to thy love,
May guide him hither.

Matil. Gracious heav'n forbid!
Conſider, Bertha, if the chance of war
Shou'd this way lead him, he muſt come in arms
Againſt his brother: Oh! 'tis horrible
To think on. Shou'd they meet, and Edwin fall,
What ſhall ſupport me? And if vict'ry ſmiles
Upon my love, how dear will be the purchaſe
By Morcar's blood! Then muſt I loſe my friend,
My guardian, my protector—ev'ry way
Matilda muſt be wretched.

Bert. Is there ought
In Bertha's pow'r?

Matil. Wilt thou diſpatch, my friend,
Some truſty meſſenger with theſe?—Away.
(*gives her letters.*
I'll meet thee in my tent—farewel. [*Exit Berth.*

Matil. (alone) Mean time
One hope remains, the gen'rous Siward—he
Might ſave me ſtill. His ſympathetic heart
Can feel for the afflicted.—I have heard,
(Such is the magic pow'r of ſacred friendſhip)
When the impetuous Morcar ſcatters fear
And terror round him, he, and he alone

Can

Can ſtem the rapid torrent of his paſſion,
And bend him, tho' reluctant, to his will;
And ſee, in happy hour, he comes this way.
Now fortune, be propitious! if there be,
As I have heard, an eloquence in grief,
And thoſe can moſt perſuade, who are moſt wretched,
I ſhall not paſs unpitied.

Enter SIWARD.

Siw. Ha! in tears,
Matilda! What new grief, what cruel foe
To innocence and beauty, thus cou'd vex
Thy gentle ſpirit?

Matil. Canſt thou aſk the cauſe,
When thou behold'ſt me ſtill in ſhameful bonds.
A wretched captive, friendleſs and forlorn,
Without one ray of hope to ſooth my ſorrows.

Siw. Can ſhe, whoſe beauteous form, and fair demeanor,
Charm ev'ry eye, and conquer ev'ry heart,
Can ſhe be wretched? can ſhe want a friend,
Whom Siward honours, and whom Morcar loves?
O! if thou knew'ſt with what unceaſing ardor,
What unexampled tenderneſs and truth,
He doats upon thee, ſure thou might'ſt be wrought
At leaſt to pity.

Matil. Urge no more, my Lord,
Th' ungrateful ſubject; but too well I know
How much thy friend deſerves, how much, alas,
I owe him!—If it be Earl Morcar's wiſh
To make me happy, why am I detain'd
A pris'ner here? Spite of his ſolemn promiſe
He would reſtore me to my royal maſter,
Or ſend me back to the deſiring arms
Of the afflicted Ranulph, who in tears

Of

Of bitt'reſt anguiſh, mourns his long-loſt daughter?
Surely, my lord, it ill becomes a ſoldier
To forfeit thus his honour and his word.

Siw. I own it; yet the cauſe pleads ſtrongly for him.
If by thy own too powerful charms miſled,
He deviates from the paths of rigid honour,
Matilda might forgive. Thou know'ſt he lives
But in thy ſmiles; his love-enchanted ſoul
Hangs on thoſe beauties he would wiſh to keep
For ever in his ſight.

Matil. Indulgent heav'n
Keep me for ever from it! O, my Lord!
If e'er thy heart with gen'rous pity glow'd
For the diſtreſs'd; if e'er thy honeſt zeal
Cou'd boaſt an influence o'er the man you love;
O! now exert thy pow'r, aſſiſt, direct,
And ſave thy friend from ruin and Matilda.
There are, my Lord, who moſt offend, where moſt
They wiſh to pleaſe. Such often is the fate
Of thy unhappy friend, when he pours forth
His ardent ſoul in vows of tend'reſt paſſion;
'Tis with ſuch rude and boiſt'rous violence
As ſuits but ill the hero or the lover.

Siw. I know his weakneſs, know his follies all,
And feel 'em but too well: He loves with tranſport,
And hates with fury. Warm'd with fierce deſire,
Or ſtrong reſentment, his impetuous ſoul
Is hurried on, till reaſon quits her ſeat,
And paſſion takes the looſely-flowing rein;
Then all is rage, confuſion, and deſpair.
And yet, when cool reflection hath remov'd
The veil of error, he will weep his faults
With ſuch a ſweet contrition, as wou'd melt
The hardeſt heart to pity and forgiveneſs.
O! he has virtues that may well atone

For all his venial raſhneſs, that deſerve
A ſov'reign's love, and claim a nation's praiſe;
Virtues that merit happineſs and thee.
Why wilt thou thus deſpiſe my noble friend?
His birth and fortune, with the rank he bears
Amongſt the firſt of England's peers, will raiſe thee
As far above thy ſex, in wealth and pow'r,
As now thou art in beauty.

Matil. O, my Lord!
'Tis not the pride, the luxury of life,
The ſplendid robe and glitt'ring gem, that knits
The laſting bonds of mutual happineſs:
Where manners differ, where affections jarr,
And will not kindly mix together, where
The ſweet harmonious concord of the mind
Is wanting, all is miſery and woe.

Siw. By heav'n, thou plead'ſt thy own and virtue's cauſe,
With ſuch bewitching eloquence, the more
Thy heart, alarm'd by diffidence, ſtill urges
Againſt this union with my friend, the more
I wiſh to ſee him bleſt with worth like thine.

Matil. My Lord, it muſt not be; for grant him all
The fair perfections you already ſee,
And I cou'd wiſh to find, there is a bar
That muſt for ever diſunite us——Born
Of Norman race, and from my earlieſt years
Attach'd to William's cauſe; I love my king
And wiſh my country's peace: That king, my Lord,
Whom Morcar wiſhes to dethrone; that peace
Which he deſtroys: Had he an angel's form,
With all the virtues that adorn his ſex,
With all the riches fortune can beſtow,
I wou'd not wed a traitor.

Siw. Call not his errors by ſo harſh a name;
He has been deeply wrong'd, and ſouls like his,

Muſt

Muſt feel the wounds of honour, and reſent them.
Alas! with thee I weep my country's fate,
Nay wiſh, perhaps, as well to William's cauſe,
And England's peace, as can the loyal daughter
Of gallant Ranulph, and wou'd, therefore, joy
To ſee Matilda lend a gracious ear
To Morcar's ſuit. Thy reconciling charms
Might ſooth his troubled ſoul, might heal the wounds
Of bleeding England, and unite us all
In one bright chain of harmony and love.
The gallant Edwin too——
Matil. Ha! what of him?
Know'ſt thou that noble youth?
Siw. So many years
Have paſt ſince laſt we met, by diff'rent views,
And our unhappy feuds, ſo long divided,
I ſhould not recollect him; but report
Speaks loudly of his virtues. He, no doubt,
If yet he lives———
Matil. Yet lives!—Why, what, my Lord?
Siw. You ſeem much mov'd.
Matil. Forgive me, but whene'er
This ſad idea riſes to my mind,
Of brother againſt brother arm'd, my ſoul
Recoils with horror.
Siw. 'Tis a dreadful thought;
Wou'd I cou'd heal that cruel breach! but then
Thou might'ſt do much, the taſk is left for thee.
Matil. For me? Alas! it is not in my pow'r.
Siw. In thine, and thine alone. O think, Matilda!
How great thy glory, and how great thy praiſe,
To be the bleſſed inſtrument of peace;
The band of union 'twixt contending brothers.
Thou ſee'ſt them now, like two deſcending floods,
Whoſe rapid torrents meeting, half o'erwhelm

The neighb'ring plains: Thy gentle voice might ſtill
The angry waves, and bid their waters flow
In one united ſtream, to bleſs the land.

Matil. That flatt'ring thought beams comfort on my ſoul,
Amidſt my ſorrows; bear me witneſs, heav'n!
Cou'd poor Matilda be the happy means
Of reconcilement: Cou'd theſe eyes behold
The noble youths embracing, and embrac'd
In the firm cords of amity and love:
O! it would make me ample recompence
For all my griefs, nor would I more complain,
But reſt me in the ſilent grave, well pleas'd
To think, at laſt, I had not liv'd in vain.

Siw. Cheriſh that virtuous thought, illuſtrious maid,
And let me hope my friend may ſtill be happy.

Matil. I wiſh it from my ſoul: But ſee, my Lord,
Earl Morcar comes this way, with haſty ſteps,
Acroſs the lawn. I muſt retire: Farewel!
You'll not forget my humble ſuit.

Siw. O! no,
I will do all that loveliеſt innocence
And worth like thine, deſerve. Farewel: Mean time
Remember, Siward's every wiſh, the bliſs
Of Morcar, Edwin's life, the public peace,
And England's welfare, all depend—on thee.

[*Exit Matilda.*

Siw. (alone) There's no alternative but this; my friend
Muſt quit Matilda, or deſert the cauſe
We've raſhly promis'd to ſupport—Perhaps
The laſt were beſt—both ſhall be try'd—he comes.

Enter MORCAR.

Morc. O, Siward! was not that
The fair Matilda, whom you parted from?

Siw.

Siw. It was.

Morc. What ſays ſhe? the dear, cruel maid!
Is ſhe ſtill deaf? inexorable ſtill?

Siw. You muſt not think of her.

Morc. What ſay'ſt thou, Siward?
Not think of her!

Siw. No. Root her from thy heart,
And gaze no more. I bluſh to ſee my friend
So loſt to honour: Is it for a man,
On whom the fate of England may depend,
To quit the dang'rous poſt, where duty calls,
And all the bus'neſs of the war, to ſigh
And whine in corners for a captive woman?
Reſume the hero, Morcar, and ſubdue
This idle paſſion.

Morc. Talk not thus of love,
The great refiner of the human heart,
The ſource of all that's great, of all that's good;
Of joy, of pleaſure—If it be a weakneſs,
It is a weakneſs which the beſt have felt;
I wou'd not wiſh to be a ſtranger to it.

Siw. Let me entreat thee, if thou valueſt life,
Or fame, or honour, quit Matilda.

Morc. Yes:
I thank you for your counſel. 'Tis th' advice
Of cold unfeeling wiſdom, kindly meant
To make me prudent, and to leave me wretched:
But thus it is, that proud exulting health
Is ever ready to preſcribe a cure
For pain and ſickneſs which it never knew.

Siw. There too thou err'ſt; for I have known its joys
And ſorrows too. In early life I loſt
The partner of my ſoul. E'er ſince that hour
I bade adieu to love, and taught my ſoul
To offer her devotions at the ſhrine

Of

Of ſacred friendſhip; there *my* vows are paid:
Morcar beſt knows the idol of my worſhip.
Morc. I know and love thee for it: But O! my friend,
I cannot force this tyrant from my breaſt;
E'en now I feel her here, ſhe ſits enthron'd,
Within the foldings of my heart, and he
Who tears her thence muſt draw the life-blood from me.
My morning ſlumbers, and my midnight dreams,
Are haunted by Matilda.
Siw. To be thus
The ſlave of one that ſcorns thee, O! 'tis baſe,
Mean and unworthy of thee.
Morc. I will bear
That ſcorn no longer: Thou haſt rous'd me, Siward;
I will enjoy the glorious prize; ſhe's mine,
By right of conqueſt mine. I will aſſert
A victor's claim, and force her to be happy.
Siw. That muſt not be. It ill becomes the man
Who takes up arms againſt a tyrant's pow'r,
T' adopt a tyrant's maxims; force and love
Are terms that never can be reconcil'd.
You will not, muſt not do it.
Morc. Muſt not! who
Shall dare oppoſe me!
Siw. Honour, conſcience, love,
The ſenſe of ſhame, your virtue, and your friend.
Whilſt I have life, or pow'r, I will not ſee
Matilda wrong'd.
Morc. You are her champion then
It ſeems, her favour'd, happy friend, perhaps
Her fond admirer too. Ill-fated Morcar!
I ſee it but too well. I'm loſt, abandon'd;
Alike betray'd by friendſhip and by love.
I thank you, Sir, you have perform'd your office,
And merit your reward.

Siw. Unkind reproach!
Did I for this deſert my Sov'reign's cauſe,
My peaceful home, and all its joys, to ſerve
Ungrateful Morcar? Why did I rebel?
The haughty William never injur'd me.
For thee alone I fought, for thee I conquer'd;
And, but for thee, long ſince I had employ'd
My gallant ſoldiers to a nobler purpoſe,
Than loit'ring thus in idle camp to hear
A love-ſick tale, and ſooth a mad man's phrenzy.

Morc. You could? Away, and leave me then:
With-draw
Your boaſted aid, and bid Northumbria's ſons
Bend to the tyrant's yoke, whilſt I alone
Defend the cauſe of freedom, and my country.
Here let us part. Remove your loiterers,
And join th' uſurper.

Siw. Mark the diff'rence now
Betwixt blind paſſion and undaunted friendſhip:
You are impatient of the keen reproof,
Becauſe you merit: I can bear it all,
Becauſe I've not deſerv'd it.

Enter an OFFICER.

Offic. Good, my Lords,
Forgive this rough intruſion, but the danger,
I truſt, will plead my pardon. As I watch'd
From yonder tow'r, a duſky cloud appear'd,
As if from diſtant troops advancing, ſoon
I ſaw their armour glitter in the ſun;
With rapid motion they approach'd; each moment
We muſt expect them here.

Siw.

Siw. Why, let 'em come,
Already I have order'd fit diſpoſal
Of all our little force. Away, good Oſmond,
Be ſilent and be ready. (*Exit Officer.*
Now, my friend,
Thou art as welcome to thy Siward's breaſt,
As dear as ever.—When the man I love,
Walks in the paths of error, I reprove him
With honeſt freedom; but when danger comes
Upon him, I forget his faults, and flee
With all a lover's ardour to his reſcue;
His ſorrows and his wants alone remember'd,
And all his follies buried in oblivion.

Morc. Thou haſt diſarmed me now. This pierces more
Than all the bitter poiſon of reproach,
Which thou haſt pour'd upon me. O! 'twas treaſon
Againſt the ſacred majeſty of friendſhip,
To doubt thy honour, or ſuſpect thy virtue.
Thou wilt forgive: But when the wounded mind
Is torn with paſſion, ev'ry touch is pain;
You ſhould not probe ſo deeply.

Siw. 'Twas my duty.
But come, no more of that. The foe advances.
If we ſucceed, as my prophetic ſoul
Foretels we ſhall—I have ſome comfort for you—
If not, we'll borrow courage from deſpair,
And die like men. Thou ſtand'ſt upon the rock
Of danger, and the yawning precipice
Opens before us; I will ſnatch thee from it,
Or leap the gulph, and periſh with my friend.

The End of the Firſt Act.

ACT II.

SCENE, *a Fortreſs belonging to* MORCAR.

EDWIN *alone (in chains.)*

EDWIN.

IT is the will of heav'n, and muſt be done.
The hard-fought field is loſt, and here I am
A pris'ner in my brother's camp: alas!
That fortune thus ſhou'd guide me to a foe
Whom moſt I wiſh'd to ſhun! We little thought
The troops by Morcar led, had this way bent
Their ill-directed courſe; but Providence
Hath ſo ordain'd, perhaps, to heal the wounds
Of civil diſcord. O! unhappy Edwin,
For what art thou reſerv'd? No matter what:
Since fate depriv'd me of my dear Matilda,
Whom I for three long years have ſought in vain;
Life hath been irkſome to me: this, perchance,
May end it—For, who knows if nature yet
May live within the conqu'ror's breaſt, to plead
A brother's pardon? Yet he knows me not,
But ſoon he muſt—Ha! who comes here? Earl Siward!—
The ſecond in command, to whom, o'erpower'd
By circling foes, and fainting with my wounds,
I yielded up my ſword. If fame ſay true,
He bears a mind too great to look with ſcorn
On the oppreſs'd, or triumph o'er misfortune.

Enter SIWARD.

Siw. Stranger, whoe'er thou art, be comforted;
Thy fate hath thrown thee into noble hands,
Who know thy merit. May I aſk thy name?
Edw. I am a poor abandon'd wretch, the ſport
Of fortune; one whoſe leaſt affliction is
To be a captive, and from ev'ry eye
Wou'd wiſh to hide the ſtory of my fate:
Too ſoon my name and ſorrows will be known.
Siw. Reſpect is ever due to miſery:
I will not urge thee further; all I hope,
That gen'rous pity could afford to ſooth
Calamity like thine, by my command
Hath been extended to thee. Here awhile
You muſt remain a pris'ner, but ere long
I hope to greet thee by a fairer name,
And rank thee as our friend.
Edw. Your gen'rous orders
Have been obey'd, and I acknowledge it
With grateful heart. May I not aſk the fate
Of him who fought ſo nobly by my ſide,
That brave old man.
Siw. The gallant Ranulph—
Edw. Yes;
My fellow captive.
Siw. He is ſafe and free.
Edw. Ha! free! Thank heav'n!
Siw. The gen'rous Morcar, urg'd
By my entreaties, pardon'd and releas'd him,
Tho' much our ſoldiers murmur'd, and demanded
His life and your's; a ſacrifice, they ſaid,
Due to the manes of their ſlaughter'd friends;
But mercy has prevail'd.

Edw.

Edw. What e'er becomes
Of an unhappy wanderer, like me,
For your kind treatment of the aged Ranulph,
Accept my thanks; it was a precious boon;
Morcar may find me not unworthy of it.
To day I am his captive, but to-morrow
May ſee me his deliverer: for know
My royal maſter, the victorious William,
With eagle ſwiftneſs, ſoon will follow me
With twenty times your force. As this ſhall prove
Or true, or falſe, ſo deal with me; remember
I warn'd you of it.

Siw. And remember thou
That I with joy receive the welcome news:
Welcome to me, for I am William's friend.

Edw. Thou can'ſt not then be mine, or England's foe:
With ſuch a heart as thine, ſo nobly form'd
To feel for the afflicted, ſatisfy'd,
For thou ſeem'ſt, of William's royal right,
What cou'd engage thee in this foul revolt,
This baſe rebellion?

Siw. What but the great bond
Of kindred ſouls, inviolable friendſhip!
The only ſolid bliſs on this ſide heav'n,
That doubles all the joys of human life,
And, by dividing, leſſens ev'ry woe.

Edw. Who knows but this day's ſad event may prove
The happy means to heal a nation's wounds,
And ſooth our jarring factions into peace?

Siw. Had Morcar thought with me, long ſince that end
Had been obtain'd; but Morcar is—

Edw. Inexorable.
So I have heard, and therefore little hope
To change his nature. O! cou'd he be wrought
To ſweet oblivion of his wrongs; to bury

His deep reſentment: Mine ſhou'd be the taſk,
A taſk, heav'n knows, I wou'd with joy perform,
To reconcile offended majeſty:
To ſoften all his errors, plead his pardon,
And give my ſov'reign one brave ſoldier more.

Siw. When next we meet I truſt it ſhall be ſo:
Mean time, let me prepare him for the change;
Retire a while—ere long we'll ſend for thee,
For ev'ry moment I expect him here:
Thy freedom and thy happineſs ſhall be
My firſt concern, for thou haſt well deſerv'd it.

Edw. Farewel. Be quick in your reſolves; the time
Requires it; and be wiſe ere 'tis too late.

[*Exit Edwin.*

SIWARD. *(alone)*

I hope we ſhall. This well-tim'd victory,
If rightly us'd, may ſmooth our way to peace.
Now, Morcar, all thy happineſs depends
Upon thyſelf alone. Now, friendſhip, raiſe
Thy pow'rful voice, and force him to be happy.
He will, he muſt—he comes—

Enter MORCAR.

Siw. My conqu'ror, welcome!

Mort. Thrice welcome to my arms, my noble Siward;
At length we meet in joy, the day is ours;
Thanks to thy friendly aid.

Siw. We muſt not boaſt;
'Twas hardly purchas'd, and has coſt us dear:
You follow'd 'em too cloſe.

Morc. I own 'twas raſh;
My youthful ardor urg'd the keen purſuit
Too far; and but for thee I had been loſt.

In

In war, thy arm protects me, and in peace,
Thy councils guide. O! how shall I return
Thy goodness? Thou wert born to save thy friend.

Siw. Away, I'll not be thank'd. I've done my duty,
And if thou think'st thyself indebted for it,
Repay me not with flatt'ry, but with love.
E'er since my soul with thine, congenial met
In social bands, and mark'd thee for her own,
Thy int'rest and thy happiness have been
My first ambition; and when thou art blest
With all thy soul can wish for, Siward then,
And then alone, will have his full reward.

Morc. O, unexampled faithfulness and truth!
But say, my Siward, is our loss so great?

Siw. The flow'r of half our troops. But 'tis not now
A time to weep, for I have glorious tidings,
That much imports thy happiness.

Morc. Ha! what?

Siw. Know that amongst our captives I have ta'en
A noble prize, will make us full amends
For ev'ry loss—the gallant Ranulph.

Morc. Ha!
Matilda's father! then I'm satisfy'd.
The wily chief! by heav'n he shall repay me
For her unkindness: Give him to my rage,
To my resentment, to my injur'd love.
Where is he, Siward?

Siw. I have set him free.

Morc. Ha! free! Thy ill-tim'd mercy hath betray'd
Our cause. The tyrant wou'd have ransom'd him
With half his kingdom.

Siw. Still thy rapid passions
O'erpow'r thy reason. What if it shou'd serve
A better purpose; smooth thy paths to bliss,
And gain Matilda for thee!

Morc. O, my friend!
My Siward, do not flatter me: By heav'n,
Her kind conſent wou'd give my raviſh'd ſoul
More true and heart-felt happineſs, than cou'd
A thouſand vict'ries o'er the proud uſurper.
Siw. Know then, I gave him liberty and life
On theſe conditions—That he ſhou'd withdraw
His pow'rs from William's aid, and never more
Aſſiſt his cauſe; the time wou'd come, I told him,
That he ſhou'd know to whom he ow'd the boon,
And how he might repay it.
Morc. That was kind,
Indeed, my Siward, that was like a friend.
O! thou reviv'ſt my drooping heart; but tell me,
Did my Matilda, let me call her mine,
Did ſhe acknowledge, did ſhe thank thee for it?
Siw. O! I aſſum'd no merit; but to thee,
And to thy gen'rous, unexampled love,
Did I attribute all. She ſigh'd, and wept,
Pour'd forth a thouſand bleſſings on thy head——
Morc. And doſt thou think, my Siward, that one ray
Of hope remains?
Siw. The clouds already vaniſh,
The proſpect brightens round thee; haſte and ſeize
The lucky moment. When the gen'rous mind
Is ſooth'd by obligation, ſoon it opens
To the mild dictates of humanity,
And ſoftens into ſympathy and love.
Morc. O, Siward! cou'd'ſt thou teach me but to win
That lovely maid———
Siw. The taſk is half perform'd
Already, and my friend ſhall ſoon be bleſs'd.
One thing, and one alone, remains to fix
Her doubtful heart, if yet a doubt remains.

Morc. O! name it, Siward; if 'tis in the pow'r
Of wealth to purchaſe, or of victory
In the fair field of glory to acquire,
It ſhall not long be wanting.
Siw. It requires
No price, but ſuch as Morcar well can pay;
No vict'ry, but the vict'ry o'er thyſelf,
And thy own paſſions—Give up thy reſentment,
Make peace with William, and Matilda's thine.
Morc. Matilda mine! and muſt I purchaſe her
At the dear price of honour? with the loſs
Of all my ſoul holds dear, my country's welfare?
My word——
Siw. Away! whilſt prudence warranted
Our honeſt zeal, I was the firſt to aid
Thy juſt revenge; but valour ill-adviſ'd,
And ill-exerted in a hopeleſs cauſe,
Degen'rate into raſhneſs. You miſtake
The pride of honour, for the pride of virtue.
Morc. And wou'd'ſt thou have me bend beneath the yoke
Of ignominious ſlav'ry, quit the cauſe
Of heav'n-born freedom, and betray my friends?
Siw. I'd have thee juſt and happy—We have been
Succeſsful, let us now be generous,
Whilſt we have ſomething to beſtow; nor wait
Till fickle fortune from our brow ſhall tear
The blaſted wreath, and leave us nought to give.
Too long already have we ſacrific'd
At proud ambition's altar, to revenge;
Now let us offer at the ſhrine of peace,
And ſacrifice——
Morc. To love, and to Matilda;
It ſhall be ſo—the ſtruggle's paſt—away,
My Siward, haſte, and tell her, I obey;
Her laws, her king, her maſter ſhall be mine;

I have no will but hers, and in her eyes
Will read my duty—Yet a moment ſtay,
What will my brave companions of the war,
My fellow ſoldiers ſay? Will they approve
This unexpected change?

Siw. I know them firm
In their obedience, and reſolv'd to act
As you command—But I will ſee 'em ſtrait,
And urge ſuch pow'rful reaſons as may beſt
Secure them to our purpoſe. Fare thee well.

Morc. Siward, thy kind anticipating care
Prevents my ev'ry wiſh—But ſay, my friend,
Where is the gallant chief, whom we ſubdu'd,
Who fought ſo hardly, and ſo nobly fell?

Siw. In yonder tent, a wretched pris'ner ſtill,
He counts the tedious hours; a heavy gloom
Sits on his brow, as if ſome deep-felt ſorrow
Oppreſs'd his noble mind—We muſt releaſe him.

Morc. Thou know'ſt, my Siward, thrice we had o'er-
His troops, and thrice his ſingle valour turn'd (pow'r'd
The fortune of the day: Since firſt I trod
The paths of glory, ne'er did I behold
Such deeds of valour wrought by mortal hand;
I almoſt envy'd, though I conquer'd him.
He wore his beaver up, nor could I trace
His features, but he bears a noble form:
Know'ſt thou his quality or name?

Siw. Not yet;
He ſeems induſtrious to conceal them both
From ev'ry eye.

Morc. Some deity protects him,
As its peculiar care, for as I rais'd
My ſword againſt him, whether the ſoft paſſion
That triumphs o'er me, had unmann'd my ſoul,
I know not; but, bereft of all its pow'r,

My

My nerveleſs arm dropp'd ineffectual down,
And let him 'ſcape me.
Siw. 'Tis moſt true, I ſaw
And wonder'd at it. When you left the field,
With deſp'rate rage he ruſh'd intrepid on,
And ſeem'd to court his fate, till circling foes
Compell'd him to reſign, and yield his ſword.
Mort. Away. I burn with ardor to forgive,
To free, and to embrace him: fly, my Siward.
Let him approach, he cou'd not wiſh to meet
In happier hour, the maſter of his fate,
For now, methinks, I cou'd be reconcil'd
To ev'ry foe. Away, my Siward, haſte
And ſend him to me.
Siw. Treat him like a friend,
He may be uſeful. Such diſtinguiſh'd merit
Muſt have its influence, he commands, no doubt,
The royal ear, and may procure ſuch terms
As William may with honour yield, and we
Without a bluſh accept. *(Exit. Siward.*
Mort. (alone) Farewel. And now
How ſtands the great account? Can I acquit
Myſelf, or ſhall I be condemn'd before
Thy great tribunal, all-repaying juſtice?
But fair Matilda wipes out ev'ry ſtain,
'Tis ſhe commands me to forgive, and ſhe
Muſt be obey'd; I'm not the firſt apoſtate
From honour's cauſe the tyrant love has made.
My friend too urg'd the change——
(Guards bring in Edwin chained.
He's here—Strike off
Thoſe ignominious chains—he has deſerv'd
A better fate. *(Guards unchain him.*
Stranger, whoe'er thou art, *(turning to Edwin.*
Thy gallant bearing in th' unequal conflict,

For we had twice thy numbers, hath endear'd
A ſoldier to a ſoldier. Vulgar minds
To their own party, and the narrow limits
Of partial friendſhip, meanly may confine
Their admiration; but the brave will ſee,
And ſeeing, praiſe the virtues of a foe.

Edw. (aſide.) O, pow'rful nature, how thou work'ſt within me!

More. Still ſilent! ſtill conceal'd! perchance thou fear'ſt,
Knowing thy rank and name, I might recal
My promis'd pardon; but be confident,
For by that ſacred honour, which I hold
Dearer than life, I promiſe here to free,
And to protect thee: did'ſt thou hide from me
My deadlieſt foe: Shou'd William's ſelf appear
Before me, he who hath ſo deeply wrong'd me,
So long oppos'd: Nay, ſhou'd I hear the voice
Of that advent'rous, raſh, miſguided youth,
Whom yet I cannot hate—my cruel brother,
I cou'd forgive him.

Edw. (diſcovering himſelf.) Then behold him here.

More. Edwin! Amazement! By what wond'rous means,
Myſterious Providence, do'ſt thou unfold
Thy ſecret purpoſes? I little thought
When laſt we met, what heav'n-protected victim
Eſcap'd my ſword.

Edw. With horror I recal
The dreadful circumſtance. Throughout the battle
I knew, and carefully avoided thee.

More. O, Edwin! how, on this propitious day,
Have vict'ry, fame and friendſhip, fortune, love
And nature, all conſpir'd to make me bleſt!
We have been foes too long—Of that no more.
My Edwin, welcome! Once more to thy arms
Receive a brother.

Edw.

Edw. Yet a moment ſtay:
By nature touch'd the ſame accordant ſtring
That vibrates on thy heart now beats on mine;
But honour, and the duty which I owe
The beſt of kings, reſtrain the fond embrace
I wiſh to ſhare, and bid me aſk, if yet
In Morcar I behold my ſov'reign's foe.
If it be ſo, take back thy proffer'd freedom,
Take back my forfeit life: I wou'd not wiſh
To be indebted for it to—a traitor.
Morc Perhaps I may deſerve a better name;
Perhaps I may be chang'd.
Edw. I hope thou art;
For this I came, for this I yielded to thee,
To tell thee William's ſtrength is ev'ry hour
Increaſing: if thou mean'ſt to make thy peace,
Now is the criſis——
Morc. Edwin, ſtop, nor urge
Such mean unworthy motives as alone
Cou'd thwart my purpoſe. Morcar cannot fear,
But Morcar can be gen'rous: for know,
Before I ſaw thee here I had reſolv'd
To ſheath my ſword and be the conqu'ror's friend;
For O! there is a cauſe——
Edw. Whate'er the cauſe,
Th' effect is glorious. Now thou art again
My brother. Here, let us once more unite
The long-diſſever'd cord. (*They embrace.*
Morc. And never more
May blind reſentment, faction, party, rage,
Envy, or jealous fear, diſſolve the tye!
And now, my Edwin, bluſhing, I confeſs,
Not to thy tender care for Morcar's ſafety,
To friendſhip's council, or to reaſon's voice,
Owe we this wiſh'd for change. A female hand
Directs and wills it. *Edw.*

Edw. Ha! a woman!
Morc. Yes,
If such I ought to call that form divine,
Which triumphs here, who rules my ev'ry thought,
My ev'ry action guides. In yonder tent
A beauteous captive dwells, who hath enslav'd
Her conqu'ror: She demands the sacrifice;
She wou'd not give her hand to William's foe,
And therefore, only, Morcar is his friend.
Edw. I cou'd have wish'd that this important change
Were to the hero, not the lover, due.
Morc. I am above deceit, and own my weakness;
But thou shalt see her—Yes, my Edwin, thou
Shalt bear the welcome tidings to my love.
Thy presence will bear witness to the change;
Thy freedom, and the joyful news thou bring'st
Of our blest union, will confirm it to her.
Wilt thou, my Edwin—
Edw. Do not ask me what.
I must refuse. I wou'd do much to serve
A friend and brother; but a task of joy
Ill suits a soul oppress'd with griefs like mine.
O! I cou'd tell thee—but 'twou'd be unkind,
When thou art ent'ring on the paths of bliss,
To stop thee with my melancholy tale.
Morc. What e'er thy griefs, I pity, and hereafter
May find the means to lessen, or remove them;
Mean time this tender office may divert
Thy sorrows; nay, if thou deny'st me, Edwin,
I shall not think our union is sincere.
Edw. Then be it so.
Morc. I'll send a trusty slave
That shall conduct thee to her. Soon I mean
To follow thee—away—begone and prosper.

But,

But, O, my brother! if thou haſt a heart
That is not ſteel'd with ſtoic apathy
Againſt the magic of all conqu'ring love,
Beware of beauty's pow'r; for ſhe has charms
Wou'd melt the frozen breaſt of hoary age,
Or draw the lonely hermit from his cell
To gaze upon her.

Edw. Know, thy fears are vain;
For long, long ſince, by honor's ſacred tyes,
United to the loveliеſt of her ſex,
Edwin, like Morçar, is to one alone
Devoted, and *my* heart is fix'd as thine.

Morc. Then I am bleſt. Thy ſympathetic ſoul,
With warmer feelings, ſhall expreſs *my* paſſion,
Wak'd by the fond remembrance of thy *own*.

Go then, thy kind returning friendſhip prove,
Go, plead with all the eloquence of love;
And as thou do'ſt thy brother's anguiſh tell,
Still on thy lips may ſoft perſuaſion dwell!
Urge my fond ſuit with energy divine,
Nor ceaſe till thou haſt made the lovely captive mine.

The End of the Second Act.

ACT

ACT III.

SCENE, MATILDA's *Tent, with a diſtant view of the Camp.*

MATILDA BERTHA.

MATILDA.

O, Bertha! I have had ſuch frightful dreams,
They harrow'd up my ſoul.
Bert. It is the work
Of buſy fancy in thy troubled mind;
Give it no heed.
Matil. O! it was more, much more
Than fancy ever form'd; 'twas real all;
It haunts me ſtill, and ev'ry circumſtance
Is now before me; but I'll tell thee all.
Scarce had I clos'd my eyes, to ſeek that reſt
Which long had been a ſtranger, when methought
Alone I wander'd thro' a mazy wood,
Beſet with thorns and briars on ev'ry ſide;
The mournful image of my wretched ſtate:
When, from a winding walk, the beauteous form
Of my lov'd Edwin, ſeem'd to glide acroſs,
And ran with haſte to meet me: But, behold!
A tyger ruſh'd between, and ſeiz'd upon him:
I ſhriek'd aloud.
Bert. 'Twas terrible.
Matil. But mark
What follow'd; for a gleam of light broke in,
And ſav'd me from deſpair: When 'croſs the glade
A gen'rous

A gen'rous lyon, as with pity mov'd
At the unequal conflict, darted forth
And ſprung with vengeance on the ſpotted beaſt,
Who turn'd with fury on his nat'ral foe,
And loos'd my Edwin; he eſcap'd, and fled:
I wak'd in agonies.

Bert. Be comforted;
The dream preſages good: Some gen'rous friend
Shall ſave him from the perils of the war,
And give him to thy longing arms again.

Matil. O, never, never!

Enter an OFFICER.

Officer. Noble lady, one
From William's camp, by Morcar's orders ſent,
Wou'd crave a minute's conference, and ſays
He bears ſome news that may be welcome.

Matil. Ha!
From William's camp! O, flatt'ring hope! who knows
But he may bring ſome tidings of my love!
Tidings, perhaps, I may not wiſh to hear.
Perhaps he comes to ſpeak of Edwin's death;
Or Edwin's falſhood—Be it as it may,
I cannot be more wretched than I am.
Conduct him hither. (*Exit Officer.*
O, my flutt'ring heart!
Look yonder! how imagination forms
What moſt we wiſh for; ſee, he comes—It is,
It is my Edwin—Save me, Bertha! O!
(*as he enters ſhe faints.*

Enter EDWIN.

Edw. What do I ſee? Matilda here! ſhe faints!

An

Am I deſerted then? abandon'd, loſt,
Betray'd by her I love? She breathes, ſhe lives!
But not for me—for Morcar; for my brother.

MATILDA, *(to Bertha)*

Where is he? O! it was deluſion all;
The form deceiv'd me. Had it been my love,
He wou'd have flown with rapture to me—See
He ſtands far off, and will not look upon me.

Edw. I dare not.

Matil. Is it thus we meet again?
Is this the kind, the tender, faithful Edwin?

Edw. Art thou Matilda? Speak; for I am loſt
In wild aſtoniſhment. It cannot be.
In Morcar's camp! Is this the lovely captive
That I ſhou'd meet?

Matil. All-ſeeing heav'n,
Bear witneſs for me: If, from that ſad hour
When laſt we parted, this devoted heart
Hath ever wander'd, ever caſt one thought,
Or form'd a wiſh for any bliſs but thee,
Deſpiſe me, Edwin; ſlight me, caſt me off
To infamy and ſhame.

Edw. I muſt, I muſt
Believe thee; Yet, 'tis ſtrange—when thou ſhalt know
From whom I came, and what my errand here.
Thou wilt not call me cruel or unkind,
When I ſhall tell thee I am come to claim
Another's right, O! heav'n, another's right
To my Matilda; to requeſt thy hand
For Morcar.

Matil. For thy brother!

Edw. Yes, ev'n now
We parted.—Here he told me I ſhould meet
A beauteous captive; little did I think

It was Matilda, whom he long had woo'd;
Whoſe gen'rous heart, he hop'd, wou'd now accept
A convert made to loyalty by love;
She only waited for that bleſt event,
With mutual ardour to return his paſſion.
Can it be thus? Alas! thy preſence here
Confirms it but too well.

Matil. Appearance oft,
By ſtrange events and cauſeleſs jealouſy,
Confounds the guilty with the innocent.
But ſure my Edwin's noble mind diſdains
To cheriſh low ſuſpicion; 'tis a vice
Abhorrent to thy nature, and Matilda
Will never practice it on thee. True love
Knows not diſtruſt, or diffidence, but reſts
On its own faith ſecure, and hopes to meet
The truth it merits.

Edw. Can this be the voice
Of falſhood?—Can thoſe lips?———

Matil. Miſtaken man!
Cou'dſt thou e'er credit the deluſive tale?
Cou'dſt thou believe I had ſo ſoon forgot
My plighted faith? But ſince I am ſuſpected,
Return, and bear this anſwer back to Morcar.
Firſt ſay, I thank him for the choice he made
Of thee to be the herald of his love:
For what is there Matilda can refuſe,
That Edwin could requeſt?

Edw. O! that recals
A thouſand tender thoughts———

Matil. Go tell him too,
What e'er I raſhly promis'd but to gain
A few ſhort moments, to preſerve my king,
And ſave a father's life, I never meant
To feign a paſſion which I cou'd not feel;

For

For I was deſtin'd to another's arms;
To one, who now regardleſs of his vows
To poor Matilda, after three long years
Of cruel abſence from her, comes at laſt
To doubt her honour, and ſuſpect her love.
Edw. O! never, never. Sooner will I doubt
The pow'rs of nature, and believe theſe eyes
Can miſinterpret ev'ry object here,
Than think thee falſe. O! take me to thy arms
And bury all my doubts.—Can'ſt thou forgive
The jealous warmth of agonizing paſſion?
Matil. I can: I muſt. But ſay, to what bleſt chance
Am I indebted for this happy moment?
Edw. The chance of war. I am a pris'ner here,
And but for thee——
Matil. When I ſhall tell thee all
That I have ſuffer'd ſince we parted laſt
Thou wilt not blame, but pity poor Matilda.
Mean while be calm; it is not now a time
For idle doubts and viſionary fears
When real dangers threat. I ſee already,
By thy imperfect tale, what miſery
Muſt ſoon await us, when the fiery Earl
Shall know this ſtrange event.
Edw. And wherefore know it?
Why not conceal our paſſion, till ſome means
Of freedom offer?
Matil. I abhor the thought.
No, Edwin, no. The criſis of our fate
Approaches. Never let us ſtain our loves
With crooked fraud and baſe diſſimulation.
Hark! did'ſt thou hear a voice in yonder grove?
Siward in conf'rence with the haughty Earl;
Behold them—ſee—they part—and Morcar haſtes

With

With quick impatient ſtep, to know his fate.
Now ſummon all thy pow'rs.
Edw. I am prepar'd.
He comes: a few ſhort minutes will determine
Whether Matilda plays the hypocrite,
Or is deſerving of her Edwin's love.

Enter MORCAR.

Morc. At length I hope Matilda's ſatisfy'd.
Edwin has told thee what a ſacrifice
My heart hath made. Ambition, glory, pride,
And fierce reſentment bend beneath thy pow'r,
And yield the palm to all-ſubduing love.
Yes, thou haſt conquer'd. I am William's friend;
The ſtruggle's paſt. I have perform'd the taſk
Aſſign'd, and come to claim my juſt reward.
Matil. By virtuous acts the ſelf-approving mind
Is amply paid, nor ſeeks a recompence
From ought beſide. You have redeem'd your honour,
Turn'd to the paths of duty, and diſcharg'd
The debt you owe your country, and your king:
England and William will be grateful for it.
What can you wiſh for more?
Morc. There is a prize,
More welcome far, beyond what e'er a king
Or kingdom can beſtow—thy love———
Matil. My lord!
Morc. If to have ſav'd thee from the brutal rage
Of pitileſs ruffians; if to have renounc'd
A victor's claim, and be myſelf the ſlave
Of her I conquer'd; if to have releas'd
My bitt'reſt foe, becauſe ally'd to thee;
If, after all my cruel wrongs, t' accept

The

The proud oppreſſor's hand, can merit ought,
I am not quite unworthy of the boon.
Matil. The good and juſt, my lord, demand our praiſe,
And gen'rous deeds will claim the tribute due,
The debt of humble gratitude; but love,
Love, that muſt mark the colour of our days
For good or ill, for happineſs or woe.
'Tis not the gift of fortune, or of fame,
Nor earn'd by merit, nor acquir'd by virtue,
All the rich treaſures, which, or wealth, or pow'r
Have to beſtow, can never purchaſe that
Which the free heart alone itſelf muſt give.
Morc. Give it with freedom then to him who moſt
Hath ſtudy'd to deſerve——
Matil. You talk, my lord,
As if the right of conqueſt cou'd beſtow
A right more precious, and a dearer claim;
But know, for now 'tis time to throw aſide
The veil that long hath hid from Morcar's eyes
The ſecret of my ſoul; and ſay at laſt
I never can be thine.
Morc. Ha! Never! O,
Recal that word!
Matil. I muſt not: Edwin knows
There is a bar of adamant between,
That muſt for ever part us.
Morc. Ha! for ever!
Diſtraction! can it be? Take heed, Matilda,
I am not to be mock'd thus. O, my brother!
Did'ſt thou not hear her? But aſtoniſhment
Has clos'd thy lips in ſilence—Never mine!
And wherefore not be mine? *(turning to Matilda.*
Matil. Becauſe I am
Another's—Well I know our hapleſs ſex,
So cuſtom wills, and arbitrary man,
Is taught in fearful ſilence to conceal The

The honeſt feelings of a tender heart:
Elſe, wherefore ſhou'd Matilda bluſh to own
A virtuous paſſion for the beſt of men?

Morc. A virtuous paſſion! grant me patience, heav'n!
I am betray'd, abandon'd, loſt. Another's!
Some fawning ſlave, ſome Norman plunderer,
Rich with the raviſh'd ſpoils of Engliſh valour,
Hath ſnar'd her eaſy heart, and tortur'd mine.
But I will drag him from his dark abode;
Where e'er he lurks, he ſhall not 'ſcape my vengeance.
Thou hear'ſt her, Edwin.

Edw. Aye! Who wou'd not wiſh
To hear the voice of nature, and of love,
Thus nobly pleading by the lips of truth?

Morc. Amazement! Thou art link'd with the vile ſlave
That hath uſurp'd my right. All, all conſpire
To make me wretched.

Edw. Why ſhou'd Morcar think
That lovely maid wou'd act beneath herſelf,
And make ſo mean a choice? Now, on my ſoul,
I doubt not but the object of her love
Hath earn'd the glorious prize, and will be found
Deſerving of it.

Morc. Thou know'ſt him then?

Edw. I do;
Know him as brave, as noble as thyſelf:
One who wou'd ſcorn, howe'er the outward act
Might ſeem unworthy of him, to do ought
That ſhou'd diſgrace his family and name,
A man he is of yet untainted honour,
Of birth and valour equal to thy own,
Though fortune frowns upon him.

Morc. Now by heav'n,
But that I know thy eyes were never bleſt
With my Matilda's charms, I ſhou'd ſuſpect
Thou hadſt betray'd the ſacred truſt repos'd

In thy falſe heart, by unſuſpecting friendſhip,
And wer't thyſelf the traitor.
Edw. Think ſo ſtill.
Let fancy, ever buſy to torment
The jealous mind, alarm thee with the thought
Of ſeeing him whom thou haſt thus revil'd;
Stand forth and dare the proof; ſuppoſe him here
Before thee, ready to aſſert his claim,
His prior right to all the joys that love
And fair Matilda can beſtow: Then look
On me, and know thy rival in—thy brother.
Morc. Confuſion! horror! miſery! O, heav'n!
Can'ſt thou behold ſuch complicated guilt,
Such unexampled perfidy, and yet
With-hold thy vengeance? Let thy light'nings blaſt
The baſe betrayer! O, Matilda! falſe,
Deceitful, cruel woman!
Matil. 'Tis the lot
Of unprotected innocence to meet
The cruel cenſure, which to guilt alone
Is due. I've not deceiv'd, I've not betray'd thee;
And wou'd'ſt thou liſten to the artleſs tale
I cou'd unfold———
Morc. Away! I will not hear,
Nor ſee, nor think of thee. Deceitful villain!
Was this thy kind concern for Morcar's ſafety?
Was it for this that ſubtle Edwin came
A willing captive? Boaſted William's ſtrength,
And lur'd me to a baſe, inglorious peace?
That, like a midnight ruffian, he might ſteal,
Unſeen and unſuſpected on my love,
And rob me of Matilda.
Edw. I abhor
A thought ſo mean; the bare ſuſpicion ſtains,
With ſuch foul blot, my honour and my name,

I will

I will not deign to anſwer thee. My birth
Alone might prove, to any ſenſe but thine,
That I diſdain it: 'Tis enough to ſay
I am Earl Morcar's brother.

Morc. I diſclaim
All ties of nature, or of friendſhip with thee,
And henceforth hold thee as my deadlieſt foe:
As ſuch I will purſue thee, ſlave, for know
Thou art my pris'ner ſtill—Who waits there? Seize
And guard this traitor———

(Guards enter and ſeize on Edwin.

MATILDA, *(kneeling to Morcar).*

O, my lord! if e'er
Soft pity touch'd thy breaſt, if e'er thy heart
Felt the warm glow of ſympathetic grief
For the unhappy, do not let the rage
Of thoughtleſs paſſion urge thee to a deed
Of horror, which, too late, thou wilt repent.
O, ſpare a guiltleſs brother, ſpare thyſelf
The bitter pangs of ſad remoſe that ſoon
Shall harrow up thy ſoul, when radiant truth
Shall flaſh conviction on thee. O! forgive
And pity———

Edw. Riſe, Matilda: 'Tis beneath
The dignity of innocence to kneel
Before proud guilt, and ſupplicate a tyrant.

MATILDA, *(riſing.)*

I feel the juſt reproach—Forgive me, Edwin;
Henceforth I never will diſgrace thy love,
By mean ſubmiſſion. Morcar, if thou hop'ſt
For future peace, or pardon, ſet us free.

Morc. I'll hear no more, convey her to her tent.

Matil. Edwin, adieu! If honour, virtue, truth,
And mutual love, protect the innnocent,

We

We yet ſhall meet in happineſs—farewel!

[*Exit Matilda guarded.*

Morc. Let none have entrance there, but faithful Siward.
Wou'd he were here, that I might pour my ſorrows
Into his friendly boſom! O, Siward!
Where art thou?—Ha, he comes!

Enter SIWARD.

Siw. My Lord, the troops,
Fluſh'd with their late ſucceſs, refuſe all terms
Of peace with William, and cry out for war
And vengeance———

Morc. They ſhall have it. Now, by heav'n,
Thou bring'ſt me glorious tidings—well, what more?

Siw. They have diſcover'd that the noble pris'ner,
Who had ſurrender'd, is thy brother Edwin;
This hath alarm'd them; they ſuſpect you both
Of vile colluſion, to betray their cauſe,
And yield them to the tyrant. If, they ſay,
You mean them fair, let Edwin be confin'd
And anſwer for the treaſon, with his life.

Morc. And ſo he ſhall: They cou'd not aſk a boon
Which Morcar wou'd more readily beſtow;
Already their requeſt is granted.—See
The traitor is ſecur'd. All-ſeeing heav'n!
Thou ſee'ſt how juſtice will o'ertake the wicked!

Siw. What can this mean? Since laſt I ſaw my friend,
How the fair day that ſhone ſo bright upon us,
Is ſuddenly o'ercaſt.

Morc. Alas, my Siward!
When thou ſhalt know—but 'tis enough to ſay
Matilda's falſe, and Edwin is—a villain.

Siw.

Siw. Amazement! can it be?
Morc. It is too true;
And I am loſt for ever. O, Matilda!
Deceitful woman!
Siw. 'Tis not now a time
For idle plaints: Conſult your ſafety: Fly
This moment to the camp——your preſence there,
And that alone, may quell the riſing ſtorm:
Leave Edwin to my care.
Morc. I go, my Siward,
Safe in thy friendſhip; I entruſt to thee
My juſt revenge. Yon moſs-grown tow'r that hangs
O'er the deep flood—'tis under thy command—
Place double guard—he muſt not 'ſcape—his fate
Shall be determin'd ſoon. What e'er it prove,
It cannot be more wretched than my own. [*Exit Mor.*

EDWIN, SIWARD.

EDWIN. *(pointing to the guards.)*
Where is my dungeon? My conductors here
Wait but your orders; give 'em their commiſſion;
For you, it ſeems, Sir, are to execute
The friendly office: Do it, and be happy.
Siw. Guards, ſet your pris'ner free—Thou little know'ſt
Of Siward's ſoul, to think it joys in ought
That gives another pain. I've learnt too well,
In ſad affliction's hard, but wholeſome ſchool,
The leſſon of humanity.
Edw. O gen'rous Siward, if thou haſt a heart
To feel for others mis'ries, pity mine,
And poor Matilda's: She has not deſerv'd
A fate like this.

Siw. Alas! it rives my ſoul
To ſee the tender bonds of amity
Thus torn aſunder by the very means,
I fondly thought for ever wou'd unite them;
And the fair ſtructure, which my hopes had rais'd,
Of love and friendſhip, in a moment ſhrunk
From its weak baſe, and bury'd all in ruin.
If thou can'ſt prove thy innocence, as yet
I hope thou wilt, for in that noble mein
I read a conſcious pride, that wou'd not ſtoop
To ought that's baſe—Still may I hope to heal
Theſe bleeding woulds, and ſooth him to forgiveneſs.
Mean time be free. Give me thy ſacred word,
The ſoldier's oath, thou wilt be found when e'er
I call upon thee; and yon tent alone
Shall be thy priſon; free to range around,
Far as my guard extends.

Edw. Accept my thanks,
The humble tribute of a grateful heart;
'Tis all I have to give. The time may come
When Edwin ſhall repay thee as he ought.

Siw. Is there ought more, which honour, and the duty
I owe my friend, permit me to beſtow,
That thou wou'dſt aſk?

Edw. O, grant me to behold
That injur'd maid, to take my laſt farewel;
Then act as fate and Morcar ſhall determine.
I give the pledge of ſafety thou requir'ſt,
And will be found—ſpeak, wilt thou liſten to me?

Siw. Of that we'll talk hereafter—come—within
I'll hear thy ſtory—Thou but know'ſt me yet
As Morcar's friend; hereafter thou may'ſt find
I am ſtill more the friend—of truth and virtue.

The End of the Third Act.

ACT IV.

SCENE, *An Apartment belonging to* SIWARD, *opening to a wood.*

EDWIN, MATILDA.

EDWIN.

THANKS to the noble Siward's gen'rous pity
For the diſtreſs'd; once more we meet, Matilda,
But only meet, alas! to mourn our fate,
To feel each others woes, and to be wretched.

Matil. Eternal bleſſings wait on him who thus
Cou'd ſweeten ſorrow's bitter draught, and make
Captivity a bleſſing! O, my Edwin!
A few ſhort moments ſpent with thoſe we love,
Is worth an age of common life.

Edw, With thee
Indeed it is; but we are on the verge
Of a dark precipice, and ev'ry ſtep
Is dangerous. If Morcar ſhou'd return,
And find us here together, we are loſt
For ever; thou haſt ſeen, and ſeen with horror,
The deſp'rate rage of his tumultuous ſoul,
Let us avoid it, let us——

Matil. What, my love?
Thou art my guide, protector, guardian, all
I have to boaſt on earth. O! teach me where
To find ſome bleſt aſylum for my woes,
And guide my footſteps to the paths of peace.

Edw. Let me entreat thee then——

Matil. O, ſpeak! thou know'ſt
I have no will but thine.
Edw. Then leave me, leave
This hated roof: I have a friend within,
Who ſhall conduct thee to the royal camp
In ſafety; bear this ſignet to the king,
He will protect thee, and what ever fate
Decrees for me, Matilda may be happy.
Matil. O! never, never: Safety dwells with thee,
And thee alone. Without my faithful Edwin,
The peopled city, and the crouded court,
Wou'd be a deſart to me. No, my love,
We will not part: The ſame benignant pow'r
That led thee hither, that, beyond my hopes
Brought my loſt Edwin to theſe arms again,
Will ſtill protect that virtue which it loves.
Edw. Did'ſt thou not tell me, that this very morn
Thou had'ſt determin'd, as the only means
To ſhun my brother's love, on ſudden flight?
Matil. But then I ſhou'd have fled in ſearch of thee.
Edw. Thou winning ſoftneſs! how ſhall I reward
Such unexampled tenderneſs and truth!
Matil. By flying with me. Come, my love, lead on,
I'll follow thee to dangers and to death;
Nor perils ſhall affright, nor labours tire,
When thou art with me.
Edw. No: It muſt not be.
Matil. Why? What ſhou'd keep thee here?
Edw. The ties of honour.
Matil. And are they ſtronger than the bonds of love?
Edw. To Siward's kind indulgence, well thou know'ſt,
I owe this little interval of peace,
This tranſient gleam of happineſs with thee;
And ſhou'd I break my ſacred word, his life

Might

Might anſwer for it; wou'd'ſt thou have me thus
Repay his kindneſs? No, my love; I may
Be wretched, but I cannot be ungrateful.

Matil. Muſt thou return then to that hateful priſon
When Morcar comes?

Edw. I muſt. O! think when I
Am pent within a loathſome dungeon, who
Shall ſhelter then thy unprotected virtue?
No Edwin there to ſuccour thee: Who knows
What brutal luſt and pow'r may dare to act,
On a deſerted, beauteous, friendleſs woman?
Diſtracting thought! A monarch's vengeance then
Wou'd come too late; wou'd make me poor amends
For my Matilda's violated charms.

Matil. He cannot be ſo mean, ſo baſe of ſoul,
Or if he ſhou'd, I have a dagger here
To ſave me from diſhonour.

Edw. What! by death?
Dreadful alternative! O! hazard not
Thy precious life, but ſeize the lucky moment
Which fortune gives us, ere it be too late.

Matil. Urge me no more; already I have felt,
Too deeply felt, the pangs of abſence from thee:
Another ſeparation wou'd be worſe
Than death, and all its terrors. No my love;
We are embark'd on a tumultuous ſea,
And muſt abide the fury of the ſtorm.
The waves of angry fortune *may* o'erwhelm
But *ſhall not* part us: We will ſtem the torrent,
Brave the proud ocean's rage, and gain the harbour
Of peace and happineſs—or *ſink* together.

Edw. Thou haſt foretold the tempeſt, and behold
It ruſhes on us.

Enter MORCAR *and* HAROLD.

Matil. Ha! Earl Morcar here!
Morc. Harold, I thank thee; thy intelligence
Was but too true. (*turning to Edwin.*
Traitor! who ſet thee free?
They wou'd have 'ſcap'd my vengeance—falſe Matilda?
'Tis thus I am rewarded for my love,
My ill-tim'd mercy to a thankleſs brother.
Back to thy dungeon, ſlave. Guards, drag him hence,
To priſon, and to death. (*to the ſoldiers.*
Edw. Or death, or life,
Are equal to me, if I muſt be torn
From my Matilda. But, whate'er thy purpoſe,
Be ſpeedy in thy vengeance, nor delay
The cruel work; for know, thy maſter comes,
William approaches—to revenge my cauſe.
Morc. But not to ſave thee.
Edw. Then farewel, Matilda,
Perhaps for ever—If we meet no more
Thou wilt remember—But I will not doubt
Thy honour, or thy love. I know thy truth.
Know thou wilt act as beſt becomes thy fate,
Whate'er it be, and worthy of thyſelf.
Matil. Of *thee*, my Edwin, rather ſay of *thee*.
Yes; I will copy well thy bright example;
I'll not diſgrace thy love with woman's weakneſs,
But part without a tear. I will but ſtay
To tell thy tyrant brother how I hate,
How I deſpiſe him, and then follow thee.
Morc. I'll hear no more—begone!—away with him.
For thee, Matilda——— [*Exeunt guards with Edwin.*
Matil. What for me remains
I know too well; thy odious love, reproach
Unmerited, and threats which I deſpiſe.

Thou

Thou think'ſt I have deceiv'd thee—think ſo ſtill.
Enjoy thy error. Thou believ'ſt us guilty;
'Twill make thee happy now—Perchance to find
Us innocent, may be thy puniſhment hereafter.
Morc. Aye, 'twas a proof of innocence to fly,
Thou and thy paramour together.
Matil. No;
I ſcorn a thought ſo mean. Cou'd I have left
My Edwin, long ere this I might have been
Beyond the reach of tyranny: beyond
Thy hated pow'r; and ſafe beneath the wing
Of ſacred majeſty, in William's care.
Morc. In William's care!
Matil. Thy conqueror's—for know
The hero comes—to ſcatter bleſſings round him,
To heal his country's wounds, chaſtiſe rebellion,
And puniſh falſe perfidious ſlaves like thee.
Morc. By heav'ns! ſhe braves my wrath, inſults my weakneſs,
And triumphs o'er her ſlave.
Matil. There was a time,
When with an eye of pity, I beheld
Thy hopeleſs love; when I conceal'd my paſſion
For the dear idol of my heart, becauſe
I fear'd 'twould make thee wretched; but thy rage,
Thy cruel treatment of a guiltleſs brother,
Has cancell'd all.
Morc. Then, mark me: If thou hop'ſt
For Edwin's freedom, ſhake off this vile paſſion;
Yield thy proud heart to him who beſt deſerves it,
And meet me at the altar—Two hours hence
I ſhall expect thee there—Beyond that time
He may not live to thank thee for thy bounty.
Matil. Then let him periſh—glut thy tyrant ſoul
With vengeance: bathe it in a brother's blood.
All ruffian, all barbarian, as thou art,

Thou can'ſt not murder his immortal fame:
Thou can'ſt not rob him of Matilda's love.
But know—when he, for whom alone this pulſe
Wou'd wiſh to beat, this lazy blood to flow
Within my veins, when he ſhall be no more;
Another life ſhall ſatiate thy revenge;
Another victim ſhall attend thy triumph.

Morc. Thou talk'ſt it nobly—'tis the common trick,
The affectation of thy ſex to boaſt
A fancied firmneſs, which ye never knew;
But with affrighted nature thou wou'd'ſt ſhrink
When death approaches.

Matil. Put me to the proof.
If thou wou'd'ſt puniſh Edwin, know he lives
Within this breaſt—ſtrike home, and pierce him there.

Morc. Imperious woman! thou defy'ſt my pow'r,
And let it cruſh thee. If thy country bleeds
In ev'ry vein; if perjur'd Edwin falls,
As ſoon he ſhall, a victim to my rage;
Thou art the murd'rer; thou the parricide:
I ſtand abſolv'd; the guilt is all thy own.

Matil. If it be guilt to ſuffer keen reproach,
Pain, perſecution, terror, chains and death
For him I love, rather than ſtain my ſoul
With foul diſloyalty, I am indeed
The guiltieſt of my ſex, and well deſerve
The pangs I feel.

Morc. Thou'ſt driv'n me to the pit
Of black deſpair, and I will drag thee down
To ſhare the dreadful ruin thou haſt made.

Matil. I know thy ſavage purpoſe; but remember,
The hour approaches when thou ſhalt repent
This baſe, unmanly triumph. William comes:
Hear that and tremble, thou unnat'ral brother;
Nor rocks, nor caves ſhall hide thee from his vengeance;

Inglorious

Inglorious and unpitied, ſhalt thou fall,
And after ages ſhall conſign thy name
To endleſs ſcorn, and infamy immortal. [*Exit Matilda.*
Morc. Inexorable judge! I ſtand condemn'd,
And ſhall await my doom; but not alone
Or unreveng'd ſhall Morcar fall—henceforth
I bid adieu to love, and all his train
Of fond deluſions—Vengeance! I am thine,
And thine alone: Thou daughter of deſpair!
Deſtructive goddeſs! come, poſſeſs my ſoul
With all thy terrors—Yes; it ſhall be ſo.
A few ſhort hours are all that niggard fate
Will deign to ſpare me; I'll employ 'em well,
For I will crowd into the narrow circle
A little age of miſery and horror.
Ha! Siward here! what brought thee hither?

Enter SIWARD.

Siw. Pity
For the diſtreſs'd, I knew thou wert unhappy,
And came where duty call'd, to pour the balm
Of friendſhip in, and heal thy wounded heart.
Morc. O, they have piere'd too deep; ev'n thou, my friend,
Thou haſt betray'd me: was it not unkind
To ſet my pris'ner free; to let him meet
Matilda, and conſpire againſt my life?
Siw. Impoſſible! by heav'n the artful ſtory
He told, ſo wrought upon my eaſy ſoul,
I thought him innocent.
Morc. Haſt thou not heard——
Siw. From Harold only an imperfect tale,
So ſtrange I cou'd not credit it.
Morc. Alas!
'Tis all too true: I am the verieſt ſlave,

The

The meaneſt wretch that e'er was trampled on
By an imperious woman: O, my friend!
My Siward! I have nought on earth but thee:
Shou'd'ſt thou forſake me in this hour of terror!
But ſure thou wilt not.

Siw. No: Whate'er the will
Of wayward fortune may determine for us,
Behold *me* ready to partake thy fate.
If we muſt ſue for peace, let Siward bear
The olive for thee: if once more we caſt
The deſp'rate dye of battle, let me periſh
By Morcar's ſide. Come, let us on together;
Shake off this load of unavailing ſorrow,
And ſeek the field; there, if we fall, we fall
With honour: if we riſe, we riſe to—glory.

Morc. Talk not of glory to a wretch like me,
Bereft of ev'ry hope. There was a time
When that enliv'ning call wou'd have awak'd
My active ſpirit, and this drooping heart
Bounded with joy; but my Matilda's loſt:
Revenge alone———.

(Enter a meſſenger to Siward with letters.

Siw. From Walſtcoff theſe;
'Tis well—retire. [*Exit meſſenger.*
(Reads)——How's this? then all is loſt.
He writes me here, that William's fame in arms,
Spite of his cruel and oppreſſive laws,
Hath rais'd him friends in ev'ry part: already
The northern rebels are diſpers'd, and thouſands
Flock to the royal ſtandard. To reſiſt
Were madneſs.

Morc. And to yield were cowardice
More ſhameful——

Siw. What muſt we reſolve on?

Morc.

Morc. Death:
The wretches only hope, the wiſh'd-for end
Of ev'ry care, but I wou'd meet him cloath'd
In all his terrors, with his reeking ſpear,
Dipt in the blood of an ungrateful miſtreſs;
And a falſe happy rival; then, my Siward,
Shalt thou behold me welcome the kind ſtroke,
And ſmile in agony.

Siw. Unhappy youth!
The ſtorm beats hard upon thee; but our fate
Will ſoon be fixt, for William comes to-morrow.

Morc. To-morrow! ha! then ſomething muſt be done,
And quickly too. If William comes, he comes
To triumph over us: then, my Siward, who
Shall puniſh Edwin? who—ſhall wed Matilda?
I cannot bear it—If thou lov'ſt me, Siward;
For now I mean to try thy virtue; ſwear
By all the pow'rs that wait on injur'd honour,
What e'er my anxious ſoul requeſts of thee,
Thou'lt not refuſe it.

Siw. By the hallow'd flame
Of ſacred friendſhip, that within this breaſt,
Since the firſt hour I ſeal'd thee for my own,
With unremitted ardor ſtill hath glow'd,
I will not—Speak, my Morcar, here I ſwear
To aid thy purpoſe.

Morc. 'Tis enough; and now
Come near and mark me: Thou command'ſt the tow'r
Where Edwin is confin'd.

Siw. I do.

Morc. Methinks
It were an eaſy taſk—you underſtand me——
Juſtice is ſlow, and—William comes to-morrow.
Thy friendly hand——

Siw. My lord!——

Morc.

Morc. Thou trembl'ſt—Well another time, my Siward,
We'll talk on't—ſhall we not? Thou mean'ſt to do
As thou haſt promis'd?

Siw. Certainly.

Morc. Then ſpeak,
And do not trifle with me.

Siw. Sure, my lord,
You cannot mean to——

Morc. Is he not a villain?

Siw. I fear he may be ſo.

Morc. A hypocrite?

Siw. He hath, perhaps, deceiv'd you, and deſerves—

Morc. To periſh.

Siw. No; to ſuffer, not to die;
Or, if to periſh, not by Morcar's hand,
Or Siward's—O! 'tis horrible to ſhed
A brother's blood——

Morc. A rival's.

Siw. Nature——

Morc. Love——

Siw. Humanity——

Morc. Matilda—

Siw. (*aſide.*) Gracious heav'n!
That paſſion thus ſhould root up ev'ry ſenſe
Of good and evil in the heart of man,
And change him to—a Monſter.

Morc. Hence! away,
And leave me—From this moment I will herd
With the wild ſavage in yon leafleſs deſart,
Nor truſt to friendſhip—but another hand——

Siw. (*muſing.*) Ha! that alarms me—then it muſt be
And yet how far—— (ſo;

Morc. You pauſe.

Siw. I am reſolv'd.

Morc. On what?

Siw.

Siw. To ſerve, to honour, to—obey you.
Edwin ſhall ne'er diſturb thy peace again.

Morc. O glorious inſtance of exalted friendſhip!
My other ſelf, my beſt, my dear-lov'd Siward——
Conſcience! thou buſy monitor, away
And leave me—Siward, when ſhall it be done?
To night, my Siward, ſhall it not?

Siw. Or never.

Morc. Let me but ſee the proud Matilda weep;
Let me but hear the muſic of her groans
And ſate my ſoul with vengeance—For the reſt
'Tis equal all. But tell me, Siward, ſay,
How ſhall I know the bloody moment? What,
Shall be the welcome ſignal?

Siw. When thou hear'ſt
The ſolemn curfeu ſound, conclude
The buſineſs done—Farewel. When I return
With tears of joy thou ſhalt my zeal commend,
And own that Siward was indeed thy friend.

The End of the Fourth Act.

ACT

ACT V.

SCENE, *A Gothic Hall.*

MORCAR, HAROLD.

MORCAR.

TREASON and foul rebellion in my camp!
But I was born to be for ever wretched,
The ſport of fortune. Theſe baſe mutineers———
Har. Your preſence on the battlements, my lord,
Diſpers'd 'em ſoon; they hang their heads in ſilence,
And all is peace.
MORCAR, (*to himſelf.*)
It is not ſo within.
Wou'd it were done or———
Har. What, my Lord?
Morc. No matter.
What urg'd my ſoldiers to rebel?
Har. 'Tis thought
The gallant captive did by ſecret means
Excite them to revolt.
Morc. It muſt be ſo.
By heav'n thou mak'ſt me happy with the tidings:
His head ſhall pay the forfeit.
Har. Whilſt he lives
We are not ſafe.
Morc. No more we are, good Harold;
'Tis fit he periſh, is it not? What ſay'ſt thou?
Har. Prudence demands his life to ſave your own.

Morc.

Morc. O! thou haſt given ſuch comfort to my ſoul—
Har. My Lord———
Morc. Be watchful: Bring me early notice
Of ev'ry motion: Go. (*Exit Har.*
Or I muſt fall,
Or Edwin—Hence, ye viſionary fears;
Ye vain chimeras, hence—It is no matter:
Conſcience, I heed thee not; 'tis ſelf-defence,
Nature's firſt law, and I muſt ſtand acquitted.
The prudent Siward ſeem'd to heſitate,
As if he wiſh'd, but knew not how to ſhun
The office. He who cou'd behold my tortures,
With all that cold tranquillity, wou'd ne'er
Have ventur'd to remove them. But I've truſted
The ſword of vengeance to a ſafer hand.
What ho! Who waits?
Enter an OFFICER.
That ſoldier whom thou ſaw'ſt
In private conf'rence with me, is he gone
As I directed him?
Offic. My Lord, even now
I ſaw him haſt'ning tow'rd the tow'r.
Morc. 'Tis well.
When he returns conduct him to me—Stay;
If Siward comes this way, I'm not at leiſure:
I will not ſee him. (*ſtarts.*) Hark! did'ſt thou not hear
The ſolemn curfeu?
Offic. No, my Lord.
Morc. Not hear it!
It ſhocks my ſoul with horror—Hark! again!
Hollow and dreadful! Sure thy faculties
Are all benumb'd.
Offic. Indeed, I heard it not.
Morc. Away, and leave me to myſelf, (*Exit Offic.*
Methought

Methought
I heard a voice cry—ſtop—it is thy brother:
We lov'd each other well; our early years
Were ſpent in mutual happineſs together:
Matilda was not there—I do remember
One day, in ſportive mood, I raſhly plung'd
Into the rapid flood, which had well nigh
O'erwhelm'd me; when the brave, the gallant Edwin,
Ruſh'd in and ſav'd me—Shall I, in return,
Deſtroy my kind preſerver? Horrid thought!
Forbid it, heav'n! (*pauſes.*) I am myſelf again.
All pow'rful nature! once more I am thine.
He ſhall not die—Who's there——

Enter an OFFICER.

My Oſwald! fly,
Fly to the tow'r this moment, haſte and ſave
My brother—Some baſe ruffian——

Offic. If, my Lord,
You mean the noble pris'ner there, I fear
It is too late: This moment as I paſs'd
The citadel, I ſaw a mangled corſe
Drawn forth by Siward's order——

Morc. Slave, thou ly'ſt.
Away this moment, bring me better news
On peril of thy life. [*Exit Offic.*
Who knows but heav'n,
In gracious pity, ſtill may interpoſe
And ſave me from the guilt? It is not done;
It *ſhall* not—*muſt* not be——All's quiet yet;
I have not heard the ſignal. (*The bell tolls.*
Hark! he's dead:
My brother's dead—O! cover me, ye ſhades
Of everlaſting night! Hide, if ye can,
A murth'rer from himſelf. Ha! ſee he comes:

His

His wounds are bleeding ſtill; his angry eyes
Glare full upon me. Speak—what wou'd'ſt thou have?
Matilda ſhall be thine: He ſmiles and leave me——
(he pauſes and recovers himſelf.
'Twas but the error of my troubled ſoul.
O! guilt, guilt, guilt! *(throws himſelf down.*
Here will I lay me down,
And end my days in bitterneſs and anguiſh.
Enter SIWARD.
Who's there? Ha! Siward here. *(riſes.)*
Speak, murth'rer, ſpeak,
Where is my brother? Villain, thou haſt ſnar'd
My ſoul; my honour's ſtain'd, my fame deſtroy'd,
And my ſweet peace of mind is loſt for ever.
Siw. Matilda will reſtore it.
Morc. Never, never.
The price of blood! No: Cou'd Matilda bring
The vanquiſh'd world, in dow'ry with her charms,
I wou'd not wed her. O! cou'd I recal
One haſty moment, one raſh, cruel act——
But 'twas thy ſavage hand that——
Siw. I receiv'd
Your orders: 'Twas my duty to obey them.
Morc. Where ſlept thy friendſhip then? Thou know'ſt deſpair
And madneſs urg'd me to it——but for thee——
Thy callous heart had never felt the pangs,
The agonies of diſappointed love;
Thou did'ſt not know Matilda—Curs'd obedience!
How often has thy inſolence oppos'd
Thy maſter and thy prince? how often dar'd
To thwart *my* will, and execute thy own:
But when I bade thee do a deed of horror,
And ſhed a brother's blood—thou cou'd'ſt obey me.
Siw. Away! this is the trick of ſelf-deluſion,

The

The common cant of hypocrites, who rail
At others guilt, to mitigate their own?
I've been the mean, the ſervile inſtrument
Of thy baſe vengeance; but thou had'ſt prepar'd
Another, a low ruffian, to perform
The bloody office; I deteſt thee for it,
Deſpiſe, abhor thee.

Morc. Thou wert once my friend.

Siw. Henceforth I am thy foe—Thou haſt deſtroy'd
The beſt of brothers, and the beſt of men.

Morc. Deſpis'd by Siward—then my cup of ſorrow
Is full, indeed—But this ſhall———

(*Attempts to kill himſelf, Siward wreſts the ſword from him.*

Ha! diſarm'd!
But coward guilt is weak as infancy;
It was not ſo before I murder'd Edwin.

Siw. The murd'rer's puniſhment ſhou'd be to live,
And ſhall be thine; thou know'ſt not half thy guilt
Nor half thy ſorrows: I ſhall rend thy ſoul.
Prepare thee for another deeper wound;
And know that Edwin lov'd thee, in his hand,
Whilſt mine was lifted up for his deſtruction,
I found this paper, 'tis the counterpart
Of one he had diſpatch'd to William, read it
And tremble at thy complicated guilt.

MORCAR, (*taking the paper*)
What's here? He pleads my pardon with the king,
Aſcribes my frantic zeal, in Edgar's cauſe,
To ill-adviſ'd warmth, and recommends
His—murderer to mercy: Horrid thought!
I am the vileſt, moſt abandon'd ſlave
That e'er diſgrac'd humanity—O, Siward!
If thou haſt yet, among the dying embers
Of our long friendſhip, one remaining ſpark
Of kind compaſſion for the wretched Morcar,

Lend

Lend me thy aid to ſhake off the ſad load
Of hated life that preſſes ſore upon me.
Siw. Tho' thou'rt no longer worthy of my friendſhip,
Deaf to the cries of nature, and the voice
Of holy truth, that wou'd have council'd thee
To better deeds, yet hath my fooliſh heart
Some pity for thee—After crimes like theſe,
There is but one way left—Say, wilt thou patient wait
Till I return?
Morc. I will.
Siw. Remember, Morcar,
You promis'd me—I have a draught within,
Of wondrous pow'r, that in a moment lulls
The tortur'd ſoul to ſweet forgetfulneſs
Of all its woes: I'll haſte and bring it thee,
'Twill give thee reſt and peace. [*Exit Siward.*
Morc. I hope for ever.
But where's the loſt Matilda? who ſhall comfort
That dear unhappy maid, whom I have robb'd
Of ev'ry bliſs. O, ſave me from the ſight,
Ye pitying pow'rs!

Enter MATILDA.

She comes—diſtraction!
Matil. O!
My lord, permit——
Morc. Away—I know thee not.
Matil. Not know me! 'tis the poor diſtreſs'd Matilda,
Who comes to aſk forgiveneſs for the rage
Of frantic love; the madneſs of deſpair,
That urg'd me to ſuch wrath and bitterneſs
Of keen reproach; but pardon—*(kneels.)*
Gen'rous Morcar,
A woman's weakneſs: Speak and make me bleſt.
Alas! he hears me not.
Morc. Matilda, riſe;
I pray thee leave me—*(weeps.)*

Matil.

Matil. Gracious heav'n! he weeps;
Propitious omen! O, my lord! thoſe tears
Are the ſoft marks of ſympathizing woe,
And ſeem to ſay, I ſhall not plead in vain.
Morc. Aſk what thou wilt, for know, ſo dear I hold
Matilda's happineſs, that, here I ſwear,
If all the kingdoms of the peopled earth
Were mine to give, I'd lay them at her feet:
But much I fear they wou'd not make her happy.
Matil. Alas! my lord, Matilda's happineſs
Is center'd all in one dear precious jewel;
'Tis in *thy* keeping——Edwin———
Morc. What of him?
Matil. Is innocent.
Morc. I know it.
Matil. Juſt and good;
He never meant to injure thee, indeed
He did not.
Morc. I believe it, for his nature
Was ever mild and gentle.
Matil. Good, my lord,
You mock me.
Morc. No, Matilda; ſpeak, go on,
And praiſe him: I cou'd talk to thee for ever
Of Edwin's virtues———
Matil. Then thou wou'd'ſt not hurt
His precious life, thou wou'd'ſt not———
Morc. I wou'd give
A thouſand worlds to ſave him.
Matil. Wou'd'ſt thou? then
My pray'rs are heard, thou haſt forgiv'n all,
And I am happy. Speak, is Edwin free?
Morc. From ev'ry care—wou'd I were half ſo bleſt!
Matil What mean you? Ha! thy eyes are fixt with horror,
Thy looks are wild. What haſt thou done? O! ſpeak.

Morc.

Morc. Matilda, if thou com'ſt for Edwin's life,
It is too late—for Edwin is no more.
Matil. And is my Edwin ſlain?
Morc. Aye: Baſely murder'd.
O! 'twas the vileſt, moſt unnat'ral deed
That e'er——
Matil. Blaſted be the cruel hand
That dealt the blow! O, may his guilty heart
Ne'er taſte of balmy peace, or ſweet repoſe!
Morc. But ever, by the vulture conſcience, torn;
Bleed inward, ſtill unpity'd, till he ſeek
For refuge in the grave.
Matil. Nor find it there.
Morc. 'Tis well: Thy curſes are accompliſh'd all;
I feel 'em here within—for know—'twas I.
I gave the fatal order, and my friend,
My Siward, has too faithfully perform'd it.
Matil. Siward! impoſſible! There dwells not then
In human breaſt, or truth or virtue—O!
Unnat'ral brother!—but I will be calm.
Morc. Alas! thy fate is happineſs to mine;
For thou art innocent.
Morc. And ſoon, I hope,
To be rewarded for it. O! my Edwin,
Matilda ſoon ſhall follow thee—thou think'ſt
I am unarm'd, deſerted; doom'd like thee
To hated life; but know, I have a friend,
A boſom-friend, and prompt, as thine, to enter
On any bloody ſervice I command. *(Draws a dagger.*
Morc. Command it then for juſtice, for revenge,
Behold! my boſom riſes to the blow;
Strike here, and end a wretched murd'rer——
Matil. No;
That were a mercy thou haſt not deſerv'd;
I ſhall not ſeek revenge in Morcar's death,
In mine thou ſhalt be wretched——
(Attempts to ſtab herſelf; Morcar lays hold of the dagger.

Morc. Stop, Matilda——
Stop thy raſh hand, the weight of Edwin's blood
Sits heavy on my heart. O! do not pierce it
With added guilt.
Matil. No more, I muſt be gone
To meet my Edwin, who already chides
My ling'ring ſteps, and beckons me away.
Morc. Yet hear me! O! if penitence and pray'r,
If deep contrition, ſorrow and remorſe
Cou'd bring him back to thy deſiring eyes,
O! with what rapture wou'd I yield him now
To thee, Matilda---bear me witneſs---Ha! *(ſtarts.)*
'Tis he---Look up, dear injur'd maid---he comes
To claim my promiſe.
Matil. It is, it is my Edwin!
(Enter Siward and Edwin: Edwin runs and embraces Matilda.
Morc. O unexpected bliſs! what gracious hand—
Siw. Behold the cordial draught I promis'd you!
I knew thy noble nature, when the ſtorm
Of paſſion had ſubſided, wou'd abhor
A deed ſo impious—'Tis the only time
That Siward ever did deceive his friend.
Can'ſt thou forgive?
Morc. Forgive thee! O thou art
My guardian angel, ſent by gracious heav'n
To ſave me from perdition. O, my brother!
I bluſh to ſtand before thee—wilt thou take
From theſe polluted hands one precious gift?
'Twill make thee full amends for all thy wrongs.
Accept her, and be happy.
(He joins the hands of Edwin and Matilda, then turning to Siward)
That vile ſlave
Whom I employ'd—— *Siw.*

Siw. I gueſs'd his horrid purpoſe,
Watch'd ev'ry ſtep, and as the villain aim'd
His ponyard at the guiltleſs Edwin's breaſt,
Turn'd ſudden round, and plung'd it in his own.
The bloody corſe was dragg'd——

Morc. I know the reſt.
O, Siward! from what weight of endleſs woe
Hath thy bleſt hand preſerv'd me!

Edw. O, my Matilda! how ſhall we repay
Our noble benefactor? Much I owe
To gallant Siward, but to Morcar more:
Thou gav'ſt me life, but my kind, gen'rous brother
Enhanc'd the gift, and bleſs'd me with Matilda.

Matil. (to Morc.) Words are too poor to thank thee as (I ought;
Accept this tribute of a grateful heart,
Theſe tears of joy; and, O! may ev'ry curſe
My frantic grief for Edwin pour'd upon thee,
Be chang'd to deareſt bleſſings on thy head!

Morc. Alas! thy bleſſings cannot reach me. Guilt
May plead for pardon, but can never boaſt
A claim to happineſs: I only aſk
A late forgiveneſs. If a life of ſorrow,
And deep remorſe, can waſh my crimes away,
Let 'em be bury'd with me in oblivion,
And do not curſe the memory of—Morcar.

(turning to Edwin.

O, Edwin! ſay, can'ſt thou forgive the crime
Of frantic love, of madneſs and deſpair?

Edw. As in my lateſt hour from heav'n I hope
Its kind indulgence for my errors paſt,
Ev'n ſo, my brother, from my ſoul I pardon
And pity thee.

Morc. Then I ſhall die in peace.

Edw. Talk not of death, my brother, thou muſt live
To ſee our happineſs complete, to hear

My

University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1388
Return this material to the library
from which it was borrowed.

Gaylord
PAMPHLET BINDER
Syracuse, N. Y.
Stockton, Calif.

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
A 000 000 585 0

PR
3461
F67m

Unive
So
Li